United Nations DP/2015/15

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

Distr.: General
4 May 2015

Original: English

Annual session 2015
1 to 12 June 2015, New York
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Evaluation

The revised UNDP evaluation policy

Contents

Chapter *Page*

I. The purpose, status and scope of the policy 2
II. The purpose of evaluation 2
III. Evaluation principles 2
IV. The evaluation architecture for UNDP, UNCDF and UNV 6
V. Operationalizing the evaluation policy 10

Annex. Definitions

15-07020 (E) 200515

Please recycle

I. The purpose, status and scope of the policy

1. This evaluation policy sets out the purpose and basic principles of evaluation, and defines the institutional architecture for UNDP and its associated funds and programmes, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV). It covers both the independent evaluations conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP; and the decentralized evaluations commissioned by UNDP programme and policy units, UNV and UNCDF that are conducted by independent external evaluators.

2. The evaluation policy is fully aligned with the overall mandates of UNDP and associated programmes and funds and with the Charter of the United Nations and its objectives. The guiding principles stem from decisions taken by the General Assembly and the UNDP Executive Board and also draw on the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

II. The purpose of evaluation

3. This policy follows the UNEG definition of evaluation, which is as an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organization. It has two broad purposes:

A. Evaluations support better decision-making and promote learning among stakeholders.

4. A strong culture of evaluation is a prerequisite for a learning organization. Evaluations are important tools for helping UNDP, UNCDF and UNV to learn from past experience, and better understand what types of development support work well and in what contexts. Evaluations should promote evidence-based decision-making. The scope, design and implementation of an evaluation should generate relevant, cost-effective and timely information. All evaluations should drive organizational learning.

B. Evaluations help stakeholders to hold UNDP accountable for contributing to development results at different levels.

5. In addition to learning, evaluations are expected to hold UNDP and the associated programmes and funds accountable to stakeholders (including their Executive Board, the funders of programmes and the Governments and citizens of the countries where they work). As such, evaluations constitute an important source of evidence for the system of corporate performance monitoring.

III. Evaluation principles

6. Evaluations should be guided by the UNDP people-centred approach to development, which enhances capabilities, choices and rights for all men and women. Evaluation abides by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity. Accordingly, the UNDP evaluation policy is guided by Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/16, in which the Council required the systematic integration of human rights and gender equality in evaluation of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

7. In carrying out their evaluation functions, UNDP, UNCDF and UNV adhere to the interrelated evaluation principles of impartiality, credibility and utility. Specifically, these

organization are expected to adhere to the following principles:

A. Evaluations must be independent and impartial

8. Impartiality contributes to the credibility of evaluation and the avoidance of bias in findings, analyses and conclusions. Independence requires that those being evaluated should not seek to influence the results of an evaluation, other than to point out errors of fact and to ensure that evaluations conform to their terms of reference.

9. To maintain impartiality across the evaluations commissioned by bureaux and country offices, evaluations should be carried out by independent entities and/or consultants, and not by UNDP staff (with the exception of IEO staff) or others with a vested interest in the result. Vested interest refers to anyone responsible for or materially benefiting from the item under evaluation within UNDP and Members States. Evaluators must also be independent from Member State Governments as well as the governing bodies of the United Nations. This independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflicts of interest.

10. To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators should bear no responsibility for, or have vested interest in, the matters under analysis, and must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially and to express evaluation findings freely.

11. Evaluations, once approved, should enter the public domain as a means to promote learning and accountability and support the utility of these oversight interventions.

B. Planning and implementation of evaluations must be credible

12. The rationale for evaluations should be stated clearly from the outset. The scope, design and plan for evaluations should take into account relevant results frameworks approved by the Executive Board, in particular the UNDP Strategic Plan and the associated Integrated Results and Resources Framework as appropriate.

13. Evaluation procedures and findings must be credible. This requires meaningful consultation on the scope and objectives of evaluations, the availability of accurate data and the timing of deliverables, etc. These are matters that require establishing trust and confidence with stakeholders. Credibility is enhanced when impartiality is maintained across all stages of the evaluation process, from formulation to implementation to public dissemination.

14. Priority should be given to evaluating programmes, projects and activities that have the potential to produce useful information for learning and accountability purposes, such as: (a) programmes/projects whose results data indicate a potential issue requiring further study; (b) approaches that are new or unusual in some way and can provide a unique opportunity for learning; (c) instances where a significant amount of resources are invested; and/or (d) programmes/projects that are expected to contribute significantly to high-level corporate results.

C. High ethical standards should be upheld

15. Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity and all evaluators, either IEO staff or consultants, must conduct evaluations in line with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

16. Evaluators must be sensitive to the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work, and evaluations must be conducted legally. In light of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality.

17. Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information

in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to their source, while ensuring that specific evaluation findings are triangulated so as to avoid being based solely on evidence that cannot be disclosed or verified.

18. Evaluations sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing. Such cases must be reported to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate the personal performance of individuals.

D. Evaluations should be carried out with high technical competence and rigour

19. The professionalism of evaluators and their effective use of standard evaluation methods are critical. Key questions and areas for investigation should be clear, coherent and realistic. Evaluation plans should be practical and cost-effective. Evaluations should be built on explicit results frameworks and theories of change, where available.

20. To ensure that information generated is accurate and reliable, data collection, analysis and dissemination for all evaluations should meet quality standards defined by UNEG and as set out in UNDP guidance. Where appropriate, they should also reflect internationally recognized professional standards, with due regard for any special circumstances or limitations reflecting the context of the evaluation. High emphasis should be placed on the development of well-crafted terms of reference.

21. Evaluator competence is critical; specifically, evaluators should have: the skills necessary to carry out data collection and analysis and establish the relevance and strength of evidence to support conclusions; and experience with methods that combine evidence from multiple sources to reach an overall evaluative conclusion and understand the difference between independently verified and self-reported data. Evaluators should keep up to date on new methodologies, and have proven competencies in line with the standards and guidelines set out by the evaluation profession.

E. Evaluation processes should be transparent and fully engaged with stakeholders

22. Meaningful consultation with UNDP management and other stakeholders is essential for the credibility and utility of independent evaluations. Without compromising their independence and in order to promote an evaluation culture based on knowledge-sharing, evaluation managers will focus on the inclusion of key users throughout each stage of the evaluation process. Specifically, information on evaluation design and methodology will be shared with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, to build confidence in the eventual findings and to ensure an understanding of their circumstances in decision-making.

23. All opportunities should be used to demonstrate the transparency of UNDP in terms of its accountability function. The evaluations of UNDP provide important assessments of the organization and should be publically accessible, and proactively presented by IEO and UNDP through relevant platforms and events.

24. To foster credibility, evaluations at UNDP should be planned and conducted in a manner that promotes national ownership and increases the participation of national counterparts, including beneficiaries, through inclusive and participatory approaches, and in accordance with the principles of aid effectiveness, specifically the principles of national ownership and mutual accountability. This may include, where appropriate, partnering with national evaluation organizations and supporting country-led evaluations. Capacity-building initiatives include guidance, training and the enhanced use of best practices and lessons learned.

F. Evaluation systems should be properly resourced, quality assured and independently assessed

25. Individual evaluations should be adequately resourced and budgets should be consistent with ambition. Resources are allocated to evaluation through a series of

evaluation plans covering programmes at the country, regional and global levels as well as through the IEO medium-term evaluation plan.

26. Regional evaluation advisors advise senior managers accountable for development results in the regions. They assist regional and country offices in preparing high-quality terms of reference for evaluations prior to their launch, and help to identify qualified independent evaluators for decentralized evaluations to avoid or mitigate potential conflicts of interest. They assist where appropriate in the design, management and follow-up of decentralized evaluations.

27. The IEO manages a quality assessment function, focusing on all aspects of decentralized evaluation: leadership; budget; and implementation. The decentralized evaluations completed each year are assessed for the quality and completeness of their terms of reference; subject, context and purpose; framework and budget; and findings, conclusions and recommendations. Evaluation results are made public through the annual reports on evaluation, and feedback is provided to bureaux and country offices for consideration to strengthen their evaluation management. The system also includes all evaluations commissioned by UNCDF and UNV.

28. The work of the IEO is subject to periodic review and critique by an Evaluation Advisory Panel which assures the quality of its independent evaluations. The work of the IEO is also periodically critiqued through peer reviews, under specific quality assurance mechanisms used by UNEG for its members.

G. Clear delineations should be made between the evaluation and monitoring functions

29. While they are mutually supportive, there is a distinct difference between evaluation and monitoring functions. Monitoring is a continuous management function that provides managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results. Evaluation is an independent judgment, based on criteria and benchmarks agreed among key partners and stakeholders. There needs to be a clear delineation of these roles and clarity on the resources (financial and human) provided to each.

H. Strengthening performance measurement systems will enhance the quality of evaluations

30. The quality and utility of evaluations are greatly enhanced through the setting of project and programme results frameworks, which establish the logical sequence of planned results and include a 'theory of change' articulating how activities and outputs are expected to lead to desired outcomes and results. Performance indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound ('SMART').

I. Management should respond to all evaluation recommendations

31. Management at UNDP, UNCDF and UNV prepare management responses to all independent and decentralized evaluations. Management responses to evaluation recommendations should include specific, time-bound actions with clearly assigned responsibilities to implement them. These responses are discussed with stakeholders and made public through the online Evaluation Resource Centre and their implementation status reported to the Executive Board in the annual evaluation report prepared by IEO. The management responses to independent thematic and global and regional programme evaluations are submitted to the Executive Board for review together with the corresponding evaluations.

32. The respective managements of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV report annually on their management responses and actions taken. The IEO analyses and the Executive Board validates these management response reports each year through in-country follow-up when

carrying out country level evaluations (assessments of development results (ADRs)), and through periodic spot checking of small random samples of completed and evaluated programmes and projects.

J. Joint programming should be evaluated jointly

33. Greater structural coherence across the United Nations system, including the expansion of joint programming and 'Delivering as one' modalities, requires a corresponding effort to evaluate as one, where feasible. UNDP plays a pivotal role in the efforts of the United Nations system to achieve greater structural coherence through evaluation within the context of its role as a founding member and major funder of UNEG.

IV. The evaluation architecture for UNDP, UNCDF and UNV

A. The institutional framework

34. In order to comply with these principles and implement the policy, the evaluation architecture for UNDP, UNCDF and UNV is set out below.

The Executive Board

35. The Executive Board is the custodian of the evaluation policy; it approves the evaluation policy, annually considers its implementation and periodically commissions independent reviews of the policy. The Board approves the biennial financial appropriation to the IEO within the context of the UNDP budget and undertakes periodic reviews and adjustments of such appropriations to the IEO based on the IEO programme of work, which the Board approves. Independent thematic and programmatic evaluations are submitted by the IEO to the Executive Board, which approves the management responses. The Executive Board is consulted prior to the hiring, renewal and/or dismissal of the Director of the Office.

UNDP Administrator

36. The Administrator: (a) safeguards the integrity of the evaluation function, ensuring its independence from operational activities and reports on all governance matters relating to accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board and its Bureau; (b) ensures that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to the evaluation function across the organization, in accordance with the Executive Board-approved financial appropriation for IEO, and reports to the Board annually on the volume of resources that the organization has invested in evaluation; and (c) is responsible for the recruitment, appointment, performance evaluation, renewal and dismissal of the IEO Director, after consultation with the Executive Board through its Bureau.

Appointment and assessment of the Director, IEO

37. Consultations with the Executive Board on the selection of the Director, IEO shall include:

(a) The submission of the terms of reference for the Director's appointment;

(b) The disclosure of candidates shortlisted for an interview as per human resources rules and regulations;

(c) The indication of the candidate (or candidates if more than one) recommended by management for the position.

38. Performance assessments for the Director, IEO will be conducted as per UNDP performance appraisal rules for senior staff, taking into account the annual reports on evaluation presented to the Executive Board and the Board's statements on the reports.

39. Renewal of the appointment of the Director, IEO will follow the same rules for

consultation as the initial appointment, taking into consideration the annual performance assessments over the period. The renewal process will be completed so as to always guarantee continuity in the function and an efficient handover when appropriate.

40. The dismissal of the Director, IEO, due to poor performance or malfeasance, shall follow UNDP policies and procedures, with advance consultation with the Executive Board, through its Bureau. The Director, IEO cannot be dismissed for public statements made in the conduct of his/her work.

UNDP programme and policy units

41. UNDP programme and policy units commission decentralized evaluations according to evaluation plans that coincide with relevant programmes (global, regional and country). These evaluations are carried out by independent external consultants consistent with the provisions in paragraphs 9, 10 and 26 of the present report. Separation of duties shall be instituted for the offices/officials commissioning decentralized evaluations and offices/officials paying for such evaluations.

Bureau for Policy and Programme Support

42. The Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) coordinates the decentralized evaluation function, working with the monitoring and evaluation staff of country offices and regional bureaux to ensure that evaluation plans are implemented consistent with the provisions stated in paragraph 26 above. BPPS provides guidance to UNDP units on the use of evaluation findings and lessons to improve organizational decision-making and accountability, and synthesizes evaluation lessons for corporate learning. It also coordinates communication between UNDP management and IEO, and monitors implementation of the management responses to independent evaluations and decentralized evaluations in UNDP consistent with the provisions in paragraph 31 above.

UNCDF and UNV

43. UNCDF and UNV have established evaluation units that commission decentralized evaluations in ways similar to the UNDP policy and programme units. Management of these organizations establish evaluation plans, allocate funding, commission evaluators, provide management responses and learn from evaluation results.

Independent Evaluation Office

44. The IEO is an independent unit that supports the oversight and accountability functions of the Executive Board and the management of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV. Its main role is to conduct independent evaluations according to the plan and costed programme of work approved by the Executive Board. The work of IEO includes:

(a) Updating the UNDP evaluation policy at the request of the Executive Board;

(b) Developing evaluation standards, procedures, criteria and methodological guidance for UNDP evaluations, and maintaining evaluation quality assessment mechanisms in order to continuously improve and enhance the quality, credibility and utility of UNDP evaluations;

(c) Conducting thematic evaluations, programme evaluations such as ADRs at the country level, evaluations of global, regional and South-South programmes, and other independent evaluations as required;

(d) Coordinating its communications on independent evaluations with BPPS, which serves as the UNDP management liaison with IEO;

(e) Ensuring that independent evaluations provide strategic and representative coverage of UNDP programmes and results and are completed in a timely manner to feed into

learning and decision-making;

(f) Assessing the quality of the decentralized evaluations of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV and monitoring compliance with best international evaluation and data collection standards, including the UNEG norms and standards, code of conduct and ethical guidelines, and contributing to innovation in evaluation methodology and dissemination of good practices;

(g) Maintaining a publically accessible repository of all UNDP, UNCDF and UNV evaluations and respective management responses and resulting actions;

(h) Distilling evaluation findings and lessons into knowledge products to support organizational learning, knowledge management and evaluation capacity development;

(i) Supporting the development of learning groups and communities of practice in evaluation by establishing and supporting knowledge networks;

(j) Engaging in partnerships with professional evaluation networks – including UNEG, the Development Assistance Committee Network on Evaluation, the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks, and regional organizations – to enhance quality and credibility;

(k) Supporting the harmonization of the evaluation function in the United Nations system;

(l) Contributing evaluative evidence to system-wide evaluations;

(m) Contributing to the annual work programme of UNEG.

Director, Independent Evaluation Office

45. The IEO is led by a Director who is responsible for ensuring its impartiality and credibility. The appointment, performance assessment and renewal of the Director are the responsibility of the Administrator, after consultation with the Executive Board through its Bureau, with the term of appointment limited to four years, renewable once and barring re-entry to UNDP.

46. The specific roles and responsibilities of the Director of the IEO are to:

(a) Safeguard the utility of the evaluation function to UNDP and external stakeholders, for both learning and accountability purposes;

(b) Develop the annual programme of work for independent evaluations, based on consultations with the Executive Board, senior management and other stakeholders, and in response to emerging issues that IEO may identify, and submit annually a costed programme of work for IEO to the Executive Board;

(c) Submit an annual report to the Executive Board on the function, compliance, coverage, quality, findings, knowledge generated, development lessons learned and follow-up to evaluations conducted by UNDP;

(d) Provide UNDP and development partners with knowledge and lessons drawn from evaluations that can feed into development programming at global, regional and country levels;

(e) Ensure that a searchable system, where all evaluation reports, management responses, the status of follow-up actions, and lessons learned and knowledge drawn from evaluations, is publicly accessible;

(f) Set evaluation standards, procedures and criteria, approve methodological guidance on UNDP evaluations, and ensure the availability of evaluation quality assessment mechanisms in order to continuously improve and enhance the quality, credibility and utility of UNDP evaluations;

(g) Regularly alert senior management to emerging evaluation-related issues of

corporate significance, without taking part in decision-making;

(h) Approve the final independent evaluation reports prior to submission to UNDP management;

(i) Ensure that evaluation in UNDP contributes to and remains consistent with United Nations policy and reforms;

(j) Manage the IEO budget, including contributions from partners;

(k) Manage the recruitment of IEO staff, in line with UNDP recruitment procedures and UNEG competencies for evaluators, and take the final decision on selection of staff;

(l) Promote national ownership and leadership of and capacity development in evaluation through country-led and joint evaluations, while ensuring the independence, quality and utility of evaluation;

(m) Prioritize joint evaluations with United Nations agencies;

(n) Establish an evaluation advisory panel, comprised of outside international evaluation and development experts, who will serve a term of three years, to review and critique IEO strategies, plans, methodologies and evaluations; and report on the composition and qualifications of the members of the panel to the Executive Board.

B. Operational policies, planning and budgeting

47. Notwithstanding its independence as enshrined in this evaluation policy, IEO, as an integral division within the overall organizational structure of UNDP, shall be entitled to benefit from the same support services (e.g., human resources, administration, financial services, information technology, communication, etc.) provided to all other departments and divisions, in accordance with prevailing rules and regulations. As a unit in the organization, IEO follows UNDP rules and regulations.

48. The policy is operationalized through a number of strategies and plans approved by the Executive Board. These are:

(a) the IEO multi-year evaluation plan. The IEO prepares a multi-year evaluation plan that is consistent with the UNDP Strategic Plan. The IEO also provides the Executive Board with a costed programme of work to implement this evaluation plan on an annual basis;

(b) evaluation plans for UNDP global, regional and country programmes. These costed plans are approved by the Executive Board concurrent to its consideration of their related programme documents;

(c) evaluation plans for UNCDF and UNV. Each programme prepares a multi-year evaluation plan that is aligned with its strategic plan, and a biennial costed programme of work for evaluation concurrent to its overall evaluation budget.

49. The policy and programme units of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV are required to develop evaluation plans for each programme cycle. These evaluation plans must be fully costed and accompanied by text explaining the logic of including the evaluations in the plan. A comprehensive and strategic evaluation plan should include an appropriate mix of programme and project evaluations, including joint evaluations. Evaluations when required by a cost-sharing agreement or partnership protocol (e.g., Global Environment Facility) are mandatory, and must be included in evaluation plans.

C. Reporting on implementation of the evaluation policy

50. The implementation of evaluation plans is monitored by IEO and by UNDP management and reported to the Executive Board at the annual session through the annual report on evaluation and management's commentary on the report. The annual report on evaluation includes the following elements that will be subject to quality assurance by the IEO Evaluation Advisory Panel:

(a) report on decentralized evaluations. The IEO will undertake an annual assessment of the status of decentralized evaluation at UNDP, UNCDF and UNV which will include a quality assessment of all decentralized evaluations;

(b) report on independent evaluation. An independent assessment on implementation of the programme of work for the year will be carried by the IEO Evaluation Advisory Panel;

(c) report on strengthening UNDP through evaluation. A synthesis of the main findings, conclusions and lessons learned across independent and decentralized evaluations about the performance of UNDP, developed jointly by IEO and BPPS;

(d) report on evaluation methodology. A report prepared jointly with BPPS, regional bureaux, UNCDF and UNV that examines lessons on methodology, approach and process from across the independent and decentralized evaluations conducted in a calendar year. The report will be made available to the Executive Board and shared more widely in the global evaluation community.

V. Operationalizing the evaluation policy

51. In order to operationalize the evaluation policy, the following actions will be carried out.

52. UNDP will present to the Executive Board a costed multi-year strategy for strengthening decentralized evaluation within six months following the approval of the policy. The strategy will include specific staffing levels and a detailed budget within a costed programme of work, as well as annual milestones and performance indicators. It will be anchored in the UNEG evaluation standards. The strategy will delineate what types of evaluations are mandatory and where programme and project managers can utilize other assessment tools, such as end-of-programme internal reviews. Elaboration of the decentralized evaluation strategy will start upon approval of the revised policy.

53. In order to ensure the impartiality of decentralized evaluations, UNDP will establish a zero-draft repository for all decentralized evaluations in 2016. The BPPS will work with monitoring and evaluation counterparts at regional and country levels to ensure separation of the operational management and payment procedures for external evaluation consultants, consistent with the provisions in paragraph 40 of this policy.

54. UNDP will update and revise the 'Handbook for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results' as an online guidance tool to ensure that global best practices are incorporated.

55. The BPPS will take responsibility for enhancing UNDP evaluation training for UNDP staff who have evaluation responsibilities. It will also maintain a roster of evaluation consultants jointly with IEO. Decentralized units of UNDP that commission and manage evaluations will receive increased advisory service support from BPPS and the regional service centre monitoring and evaluation teams on issues of evaluation design and methodology.

56. UNDP will operationalize the evaluation policy by amending related Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures ('POPP'). The BPPS will update the relevant guidelines, handbooks and toolkits in conformity with this policy, taking into account UNEG norms and standards and IEO recommendations. This will include guidance clarifying how policy standards concerning impartiality and evaluation ethics should be carried out by bureaux and country offices. Guidance will also be developed that further details what types of evaluations are mandatory, where programme and project managers can utilise other assessment tools, and what these other tools are, consistent with the provisions in paragraph 14 above.

57. UNDP programme units are responsible for supporting Governments in developing

national evaluation capacities. Recognizing its strategic focus on government capacity development, UNDP will expand its national evaluation capacity work through a new programme including support to national evaluation capacity development. The programme will be managed by BPPS and IEO will provide guidance as needed. Costing and proposed areas of work related to national evaluation capacity development will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration. Programme results will be reported annually to the Board.

58. In collaboration with UNEG, the IEO supports national evaluation capacity development by jointly promoting opportunities to address evaluation issues confronting countries, together with UNDP regional bureaux and BPPS.

Annex

Definitions

Several key definitions are set out in this policy, in particular to characterize different types of evaluations and to distinguish the evaluation function from other results-based management and accountability activities carried out at UNDP.

1. Evaluation and related concepts

Evaluation is an independent judgment, based on criteria and benchmarks agreed among key partners and stakeholders. It is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. A rigorous, systematic and objective process should be used to design, analyse and interpret information to answer specific questions about the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of an intervention under study. Evaluations should focus on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. Evaluations should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, and provide strategic lessons to guide decision makers and inform stakeholders. The evaluations conducted by UNDP fall into two categories: independent evaluations conducted by the IEO; and decentralized evaluations commissioned by policy and programme units and conducted by independent external experts.

Joint evaluations involve the active participation of other implementing agents and stakeholders. Any evaluation can be conducted as a joint evaluation; there are various degrees of 'jointness', depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting. To be considered an independent evaluation, the joint evaluation should be conducted jointly with other independent evaluation offices.

Monitoring is a continuous management function that provides managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency with or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results.

Reviews are closely associated with monitoring and are periodic assessments of the performance of an initiative, and do not necessarily apply the due process and methodological rigor of evaluation.

Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value to and improve an organization's operations. It assesses and contributes to the improvement of governance, risk management and control processes in responding to risks regarding the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information; effectiveness and efficiency of operations; safeguarding of assets; and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures.

2. Decentralized evaluations

Decentralized evaluations assess the contributions of UNDP to development results at the outcome level. These evaluations are commissioned by UNDP bureaux and country offices. They should together provide sufficient coverage of programmatic activities, addressing all outcomes in bureau and country programme plans. Their purpose is to produce evaluative evidence to inform decision-making and support accountability and learning. In addition to their use as a learning tool at the bureau and country level, decentralized evaluations are essential building blocks for programmatic and thematic evaluations carried out by IEO.

Outcome evaluations address the short-, medium- and long-term results of a programme or cluster of related UNDP projects. They include an assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and relevance of the programme against their own objectives, their combined contribution and the contribution of external factors and actors. Outcome evaluations also examine unintended effects of the programme or projects. Rather than being ad hoc, the selection of the programme or project cluster to be evaluated should be guided by strategic decisions made by the programme unit, in line with the evaluation plan. This decision should be informed by agreements with national government and key stakeholders and partnership requirements, with attention to utility and linkage with strategic and programmatic evaluations.

Project evaluations assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a project in achieving its intended results. They assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to medium-term and longer-term outcomes. Projects can be evaluated during the time of implementation, at the end of implementation (terminal evaluation) or after a period of time after the project has ended (post-evaluation). Project evaluations are important tools for managing for results, and serve to reinforce the accountability of project managers. Additionally, project evaluation provides a basis for the evaluation of outcomes and programmes, as well as for strategic and programmatic evaluations and ADRs, and for distilling lessons from experience for learning and sharing knowledge.

3. Independent evaluations conducted by the IEO

Thematic evaluations assess the performance of UNDP in areas that are critical to ensuring sustained contributions to development results in the context of emerging development issues and changing priorities at the global and regional levels. Thematic evaluations may cover, for example, UNDP policies, focus and results areas, cross-cutting issues such as gender and capacity development, partnerships, programmatic approaches, cooperation modalities or business models. These evaluations primarily address the accountability dimension of evaluation.

Programme evaluations that cover the global, regional and South-South programmes as well as the UNDP Strategic Plan assess the performance and intended and achieved results of those programmes. They are intended to reinforce the substantive accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board, and will be timed to contribute to the preparation and approval of the next programme.

Global, regional and country programme evaluations assess UNDP attainment of intended results and contributions to development results and outcomes as outlined in the respective programmes. The evaluations examine key issues such as the effectiveness of UNDP in delivering and influencing the achievement of development results and UNDP strategic positioning.

ADRs are also programme evaluations that assess the attainment of intended and achieved results as well as the contributions of UNDP to development results at the country level. Their scope includes, but is not necessarily confined to, the responsiveness and alignment of UNDP to country challenges and priorities; strategic positioning; use of comparative advantage; and engagement with partners. The number and selection of countries, and the timing of these evaluations are determined to ensure coverage and to allow findings and recommendations to feed into the preparation of the subsequent programme. Wherever possible, these evaluations are conducted jointly or at a minimum, in coordination with other United Nations organizations.